

How Everyone Can Get Involved

Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers have a duty to protect our children and to prevent their brutal abuse at the hands of child pornographers and online predators. Accordingly, PSC aims to enhance the law enforcement response to these growing threats. But PSC is built with the recognition that preventing the exploitation of children, and assisting the young victims of exploitation, requires a community-wide effort. PSC therefore calls for a comprehensive effort—by all of the law enforcement and non-law enforcement partners—to increase awareness about these dangers to children, to educate parents and children about Internet safety, to identify and help children who may have been victimized, and to build communities in which America's youth can thrive without fear of sexual abuse and exploitation.

To further the goal of building broad, community-based partnerships aimed at protecting our children, this Part will discuss in greater detail the opportunities that exist for other community members to partner with law enforcement in implementing the goals of PSC. This catalogue is not exclusive; a successful dismantling of child pornographers and sexual predators will require everyone's efforts. But this Part is intended to enhance the community-based approach to protecting our children from sexual abuse, exploitation, and pornography, by illustrating ways that PSC coalitions can engage a variety of partners dedicated to this issue, and that these partners can seek to get involved.

Parents

Many parents assume that their homes are a refuge from the dangers of the world outside. However, the threat to our children

"The chief responsibility to protect America's children lies with their parents. You are responsible for the welfare of your child. It's your responsibility."

President George W. Bush,
October 23, 2002

posed by the Internet is unique because the Internet can bring some of the worst dangers of the outside world into the sanctity of the home. Children are often more savvy than their parents about computers, making



monitoring and understanding their online activities difficult for parents. By participating in PSC activities or by utilizing the tools available from PSC partners, however, parents can learn more about safe Internet usage, keep up with new risks and safety strategies, and engage their family in detecting and preventing child exploitation.

There are several Department-sponsored resources on the Internet to help educate parents on the dangers their children face and assist parents in maintaining a safe home Internet environment. For example, Net-Smartz (www.netsmartz.org), i-Safe (www.isafe.org), and Web Wise Kids (www.webwisekids.org).

wisekids.org) are Internet safety websites that receive funding from the Department's Office of Justice Programs. These websites have developed extensive educational resources for parents. For instance, among its resources, NetSmartz makes the following recommendations to parents:

- ❖ Talk to children about not responding to offensive or dangerous e-mail, chat, or other communications. Report any such communication to local law enforcement. Do not delete the offensive or dangerous e-mail; turn off the monitor, and contact local law enforcement.
- ❖ Keep the computer in the family room or another open area of your home.
- ❖ Get informed about computers and the Internet.
- ❖ Let children show you what they can do online, and visit their favorite sites.
- ❖ Have children use child-friendly search engines when completing homework.
- ❖ Know who children are exchanging e-mail with, and only let them use chat areas when you can supervise. NetSmartz recommends limiting chat-room access to child-friendly chat sites.
- ❖ Be aware of any other computers your child may be using.
- ❖ Internet accounts should be in the parent's name with parents having the primary screenname, controlling passwords, and using blocking and/or filtering devices.
- ❖ Children should not complete a profile for a service provider and children's screennames should be nondescript so as not to identify that the user is a child.

Parents can be the eyes and ears of law enforcement. If they see evidence that someone is attempting to target their child for exploitation, they can take action by reporting to law enforcement any suspected possession, manufacture, or distribution of child pornography, online enticement of children for sexual acts, sexual molestation of children, or other illegal behavior against children. Such activity should be reported to the CyberTipline administered by NCMEC.

Percentage of Under Age Internet Users Who:

- Posted e-mail address for all to see: **21%**
- Posted some personal information for all to see: **11%**
- Went to X-rated sites on purpose: **8%**
- Sent picture of self to someone they met online: **7%**
- Posted picture of self for all to see: **5%**
- Talked about sex online with someone they had never met in person: **4%**

From a telephone survey conducted by the Crimes Against Children Research Center from August 1999 to February 2000 of a representative national sample of 1,501 young people, ages 10 through 17, who use the Internet regularly. Sources by IDC; NCMEC.

PSC coalitions should seek to find ways to engage and involve parents. Activities could include hosting parent and community forums, and inviting investigators from ICAC task forces or other agencies to conduct prevention and educational informa-

tion sessions. Investigators can also address emerging threats such as social networking sites. In addition, many law enforcement agencies support neighborhood associations through their community policing efforts. PSC partnerships should explore these and other opportunities to participate in meetings with parents and children to discuss related prevention and safety information.

Schools

Schools can play an important role in PSC. While the Internet is a valuable educational tool, schools must teach children about online dangers, the ways in which predators can use the Internet to target them, and what children should do if they are solicited inappropriately. There are a number of existing programs developed for these purposes, including the NetSmartz program created by NCMEC and the i-Safe programs, among other Internet safety programs funded by the Department's Office of Justice Programs. One example is a collaborative effort between the ICAC program and NetSmartz, which resulted in the creation of a 2-CD set targeting various age groups. Well over 10,000 CD sets are already in circulation through the ICAC task force network, and they continue to be disseminated at ICAC and NCMEC training sessions. The CD package includes lesson plans, discussion cards, and all of the information necessary to carry out the program with no additional support or training. Similar collaborations have been developed between NCMEC and ICE.

Many schools have developed or adopted educational programs focusing on Internet safety for their students. In fact, some states have enacted laws requiring that Internet safety be taught in schools, and local Departments of Education have officially adopted the NetSmartz or i-Safe Internet safety curriculums as part of their



overall approach to educating and protecting students from online risks. For instance, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation has joined with the Georgia Department of Education to develop and implement an initiative that includes the establishment of Internet and computer user policy and standards for all Georgia schools.

Many states and schools, however, have not yet established or adopted Internet safety programs. Local PSC partners need to be aware of the safety programs and other educational systems being used in their district, and they should identify areas and schools that do not currently have programs in place. For schools that do not already have programs, the local partners have an opportunity to assist the school in creating them or adopting existing programs.

The individuals that teach our children and make our schools run are also key partners. This includes teachers, teaching-assistants and aides, school administrators, School Resource Officers (SROs), and leaders of extracurricular activities. These individuals and programs all need to play an important role in teaching children how to navigate the Internet safely. They also may be among the first to recognize either inappropriate behavior by a possible online

predator, or identify a child that has been victimized and abused by a predator or child pornographer.

In particular, PSC partnerships should consider providing resources to SRO programs as a way of ensuring that Internet safety information is incorporated into their ongoing activities for all grades. The Department's Office of Community-Oriented Policing Service provides funding to local law enforcement to help establish SRO programs across the country, and the Office of Justice Programs offers training programs to support that initiative.

Schools can also serve a role in educating parents about online dangers to their children. Parent-teacher organizations provide an excellent means of reaching and educating parents. Some training programs funded by the Department's Office of Justice Programs require parental participation.

Youth Organizations

Groups such as Boys and Girls Clubs, the Boy and Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations can serve an important role, both in educating children about the dangers on the Internet, and in recognizing victims and getting law enforcement involved. In many instances, children and teens respond better to messages received from peers, and they may be more willing to share information regarding their experiences with peers. These organizations are instrumental in protecting children. PSC partnerships should consider providing relevant information and resources to these organizations to further the goals of teaching kids about Internet safety and of recognizing and assisting victims of exploitation.

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations are, by their nature, established to provide a public



service to the community. More importantly, individuals involved in such organizations often have a strong desire to contribute to the betterment and well-being of their neighborhoods.

Groups such as the Kiwanis, YMCA, and Rotary Club, just to name a few, provide a variety of resources through community outreach programs. They are a good resource for law enforcement in their effort to educate children and parents on dangers the Internet can pose to children in the community. PSC partnerships should consider providing relevant information and resources to these organizations to further the goals of PSC.

State and Local Law Enforcement Associations and Chapters

These organizations can serve as an important mechanism through which individual investigators and prosecutors can share experiences and educate one another about how to best investigate and prosecute these crimes. In addition, such groups can also serve as effective partners for training and outreach. Groups such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police and the National Sheriff's Association can be instrumental in improving the ability of state and local law enforcement to respond to child exploitation crimes. For instance,

these groups have in some states effected revisions to police academy curriculum to incorporate training regarding the recognition and investigation of computer-facilitated crimes against children, and they also have initiated the proposal of legislation to strengthen state laws regarding the prosecution of offenders and to develop more efficient methods for securing information from Internet service providers.

Local Businesses and Business Organizations

Local businesses are important partners in any community. Many businesses serve as good stewards to their community by investing in community programs and initiatives. It is a natural partnership for businesses and law enforcement to work together to invest in the safety of the children in the community. And all businesses are encouraged to take action to alert law enforcement to any inappropriate use of the Internet by their employees to access child pornography or to entice minors.

Private businesses and organizations involved in the telecommunications industry, and the Internet sector in particular, may be especially valuable to the PSC initiative. The process of catching child predators sometimes begins with Internet service providers (ISPs) reporting the presence of child pornography offenses on their systems. Some ISPs have shown great leadership in developing and promoting effective reporting mechanisms, and all ISPs should expand their efforts to ensure that they report such offenses to NCMEC and, in turn, to the appropriate law enforcement authorities. Cooperation with law enforcement is critical in efforts to identify perpetrators and those who aid them. Furthermore, with the creation of camera and video

phones, a new threat has developed and child predators have utilized this technology for solicitation and for distribution of child pornography. The technology community is a partner in the prevention, investigation, and prosecution of these crimes. They are also important in the recovery and healing of child victims. Law enforcement looks forward to continuing its work with the technology community, particularly ISPs.



Tribute to Adam Walsh in NCMEC Lobby, created by artist Meghan Walsh, Adam's sister.

Victim Service Providers

As law enforcement works to bring offenders to justice, it is vital that we also place a focused priority on the needs of the child who has been victimized and exploited. The committed and well-trained individuals who work in the victim service field are often the first to come into contact with the victim. Victim service providers, particularly those providing services for sexual assault victims in state sexual assault coalitions, are also best able to understand the needs, both physical and emotional, of victims. They assist law enforcement in conducting forensically sound interviews with victims, coordinating investigations, identifying additional victims, and ensuring that

victims are treated in a way that is sensitive to their needs, while providing law enforcement the maximum opportunity to investigate and prosecute the crime. Victim-witness coordinators already work in federal and state prosecutors' offices and provide essential assistance. And forensic interviewers at Child Advocacy Centers help law enforcement to conduct the interviews of victims and provide other services through their network of child protection agencies. It is critical—not only for the investigation and prosecution of such offenses, but also for the well-being of the child-victim—that all types of victims' services providers partner with law enforcement in the PSC initiative by contacting the PSC Coordinator in their local U.S. Attorney's office.

Faith-Based Organizations

Throughout our nation's history, houses of worship and other faith-based organizations have served as pillars of the community, and often as the sole service providers for those in need. The mission of most faith-based groups is to minister to the whole person—to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.

A faith-based organization is in a unique position when dealing with a child victim, as well as with the families of those victims that can be deeply affected by abuse. A child who may be afraid of law enforcement and leery of disclosing his or her abuse to an adult may find it easier to confide in someone within their religious family. Many religious organizations provide counsel and safe shelter to children and their families, as well as any health care the victim may need. Children who have been abused by a family member or exploited over the Internet suffer the effects long after the abuser is put in jail. Working with the PSC partners, the faith-based community can play a crucial role in

protecting, healing, and ministering to the child long after their abuser has been brought to justice. PSC partners should consider providing relevant information to these organizations to advance the goals of the PSC initiative.



Media

Media outlets are uniquely suited to helping PSC partners educate their local community about the dangers the Internet poses to children and the steps that parents and children can take in response to this gathering threat. Moreover, media outlets can help law enforcement in mobilizing the community to locate victims, such as children who may have been abducted by offenders who approached them online. The AMBER Alert program is an excellent example of the media's ability to assist law enforcement efforts to protect and rescue children.

PSC partnerships should seek ways to engage media outlets in furthering the goals of PSC, such as through public service announcements (PSAs). U.S. Attorney's offices may participate in PSAs with other PSC partners when doing so will further the Department's mission and if the PSA accurately reflects the role of the individual U.S. Attorney's office. However, all PSAs involv-

ing U.S. Attorneys' offices must be approved by the Department's Office of Public Affairs, and U.S. Attorney's offices should not participate in PSAs used for fundraising purposes. U.S. Attorney's offices may present PSAs to community leaders and groups or make them available for viewing by interested organizations.

U.S. Attorneys' offices should avoid direct contact with the media regarding air time, and should not organize efforts to obtain air time for PSAs. However, other members of PSC partnerships may contact the media and find ways to get media outlets involved in advancing the goals of PSC. Any media efforts involving U.S. Attorney's offices must, of course, be consistent with governing provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 relating to the privacy rights of defendants and victims.

In addition to PSAs, U.S. Attorney's offices and their PSC partners should consider providing information—such as information regarding prosecutions and sentences—for special reports and future stories by local and national media outlets. In addition, many communities have local television channels that scroll information for use by these stations. Information regarding local prosecutions and operations enhances public awareness of the Department's campaign against child sexual exploitation and abuse.

An example of a collaborative effort already in place is the joint efforts of the Cleveland Field Office of the FBI and the Cuyahoga County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, who have joined with the local Clear Channel radio and television affiliates to promote targeted PSAs for varying age ranges and consumer audiences. These collaborative efforts have resulted in at least three separate town hall meetings and the establishment of a regular local-access spot dealing primarily with child exploitation issues.

Family Advocacy Organizations, Child-Serving Agencies, and Non- Governmental Organizations

Family advocacy organizations, as groups focused on the health and well-being of the family, can be very beneficial in helping to educate parents. These networks of advocacy organizations and other grassroots organizations can teach parents about the dangers the Internet poses to children; how to talk to kids about these dangers; and about the resources available to parents and schools to teach children how to safely navigate the Internet and recognize inappropriate behavior.

Family and youth services departments, human services agencies, child health agencies, child advocacy centers, and other aligned agencies in the public and private sectors have many opportunities to encourage children to practice Internet safety skills and to determine whether the children have encountered exploitative situations on the Internet. These agencies can disseminate safety information in brochures and posters and can conduct public education outreach presentations. If their work includes home visits or operating residential programs, they can monitor the placement and use of computers in children's living areas.

If these organizations, in working with children, youth, and families, become aware of Internet exploitation, they can take action to assist the family by reporting the information to law enforcement. Agencies that have investigative functions, such as Child Protective Services working with law enforcement on multi-disciplinary, team-based investigations of child abuse and exploitation, can also assess a child's risk for computer exploitation as part of other ongoing children safety investigations.

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